

Grigsby Family

Drawer 1

Brothers/Sisters

71.2059.285.05349



Thomas Lincoln Family

Grigsby Family

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

LINCOLN-GRIGSBY FEUD.

Family Turmoil Caused by a Poetical Effusion of the President-to-Be.

Chicago Tribune

It is not at all likely that the following story will cause any unpleasant feelings between any of the Lincolns and Grigsbys now living. The feud died out long ago.

One of the Grigsby boys married Lincoln's only sister; the other Grigsby married some one else. The match which made him a brother-in-law did not suit Abraham Lincoln. There was bad family blood at the start, and the family relation row is one that no diplomacy ever settles. You may think you have forgiven the fellow who married your sister and abused her, but you never do. You go gunning for him in your sleep.

In the good old days when a couple married it was the proper thing to have at the home of the bridegroom or his people what was called an "infair." That's a dear old word! The best blood of this country used it. The rock-hound, wayback, royal-stripped, full-blown, yard-wide aristocracy of this country indulged in the "infair." It was the feast after the wedding when all feuds were made up between those attending—when one family met the other half way and spat on the slate—that's not elegant, but it seems to fit—and rubbed out the past. The "infair" was a glorious event. The way they do it to-day is to issue a card "at home," and put in a date. But there isn't any "cherry bounce" or "apple toddy," or "bride's cake" at an "at-home." There isn't any music of the fiddle, no flying feet, no rush of blood, no hectic cheeks, no pleasure-wearied limbs, no sleeping until afternoon in the "at-home."

People who were not invited to the "infair" in the g. o. d. understood most emphatically that the newly-made couple did not desire to keep up their acquaintance. No invitation to the infair meant no latch string any more. The Lincolns were not invited to the Grigsby infairs.

Young Lincoln had the same streak of human nature in his composition that runs in the average man. As people say in this advanced and electric age, if they are disposed to be slangy, "Lincoln got hot under the collar." He came from Kentucky, and all Kentuckians resent a slight as quickly as a dog does a tin-can when it is attached.

Mr. Lincoln wrote, following this infair, what he called the "Chronicles." It was in the style of the Old Testament Book of Chronicles, and showed up the Grigsby tribe in a way that would have made them the laughing-stock of the country. Having indulged in this revenge Lincoln took the manuscript and put it where he knew young Grigsby, the one who had married his sister, would get it. These chronicles were found by the Grigsbys, and they put them away, as they supposed, where no eye would ever see them again. But in this they were mistaken, as will be seen further on.

A man in Rockford who has read them repeated the following, which he says was appended to the chronicles, and also composed by Lincoln:

Charlie and Renben are married,
Mother well pleased with the match;
The egg it was laid, and Renb was afraid
That the egg was so soft 'twouldn't hatch.

The insult of the chronicles infuriated young Grigsby—Abe's brother-in-law—and the result was a challenge. Not a duel with weapons, Kentucky style, but a knock-down, a scratch and punch, with a ring and seconds. Young Grigsby was "spoiling for a fight," as they say in these parts, but he said Abe was too big—that the match would be unequal. Lincoln had a step-brother, John Johnson, who was about Grigsby's size, and he took up the challenge in behalf of the Lincoln side of the house.

John Gentry, a resident before alluded to, was a witness at this fight. He gave the Tribune correspondent the following account of the affair:

"The ring was pitched in Warrick county, a short distance from the old Lincoln homestead. That was for the purpose of evading any investigation by the grand jury. The fight was well advertised. I don't mean in the newspapers, for there were no newspapers in those days, but it was adver-

tised by talk. Every township in the county was represented, I reckon. I know there was a big crowd present. Abe Lincoln was there, and he was mad because he couldn't get anybody to fight him. Aaron Stanridge was John Johnson's second, and William Whitney appeared for Grigsby. The underbrush had been cleared away. The contestants went at it without gloves. I don't mind how many rounds were fought, but every one was a knock-down for somebody. There was no such foolishness as there is in this age. I remember that the seconds came pretty nigh coming together two or three times. Finally Grigsby gave out, and he was asked if he had had enough, and he said yes. That wound up the Lincoln-Grigsby feud. It left the Lincolns on top."

Although, according to the story, it was generally known that Lincoln had revenged himself upon the Grigsbys by satirizing them in his chronicles the neighbors had not read the papers because no one had seen them.

Years after, when the Grigsby house was being rebuilt, the boss carpenter, who was posted on the feud and its outcome, found secreted under one end of a rafter a bundle of manuscript. The writing was dim with age, but not too dim for the carpenter to read. As he read he became interested and his hammer fell from his hand. Finally he said to his assistant in a solemn tone:

"Bill, here's a part of the Bible that's never been printed."

The story traveled about the neighborhood and created curious comment until the Grigsbys got the manuscript in their possession again, and it is the opinion in this county that they didn't put the papers under another rafter.

Gentryville Man Tells New Stories Of Lincoln Handed Down in Family

Eli Grigsby Descendant of Intimate Friends of Emancipator as Youth

Gentryville, Feb. 11.—(Special)—ABOUT 116 years ago Thomas Lincoln left his old Kentucky home to come to seek a new home in Indiana. Those now living in the hills of northern Spencer county can almost imagine themselves back in those times and see a tall gaunt lad who was destined, one day as president, to lead the nation safely through the greatest crisis in its history.

From the time they settled here in 1816 until they moved on to Illinois 14 years later the Lincolns were intimate friends of the Grigsbys. Eli Grigsby, a lineal descendant living in Gentryville, has consented (the first time any Grigsby has spoken for publication) to give some interesting and hitherto unpublished facts which he said were passed on to him by his elders.

Most writers say that Thomas Lincoln and his family belonged to Little Pigeon church and that Sarah Lincoln Grigsby lies buried in the churchyard there. This, Grigsby says, is an error. They belonged to the Old Pigeon Primitive Baptist church and she was buried in the cemetery of that church. The Little Pigeon church, three miles south, according to all accounts, was built years after the Lincolns went to Illinois and has no connection with them, Grigsby says.

TELLS OWN STORY

Grigsby's story, as written out by him in his own words, follows:

These are the facts as told me by my grandfather, R. D. Grigsby, and my great uncle, Nathaniel (Uncle Nattie) Grigsby.

Thomas Lincoln, the father of from Kentucky in search of a location for a home. He by chance met my great grandfather, Reuben Grigsby, who also was formerly from Kentucky and who owned a large farm, a part of which is now owned by Ed Roos in Clay township.

Thomas Lincoln, the father of Abraham Lincoln, being a cooper by trade, entered into a contract with Reuben Grigsby to take from him trees, which he would split and rive and make into lard tierces, whisky barrels and kegs for Grigsby, who owned and operated a large still, farmed on a large scale, handled large quantities of whisky, meat and lard, and flatboated down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers as far as New Orleans for disposition of his products.

RETURNS FOR FAMILY

After the contract was made the pole house (open on the south side with skins hung over the opening) was erected by Lincoln, assisted by the Grigsbys. Lincoln then returned to Kentucky for his family who, in due time, arrived at the Grigsby home and stayed with the Grigsbys until rested from their journey, when they moved into the pole house. Then, when not making tierces, barrels and kegs, he took a lease for two years on a tract of land adjoining the pole house and raised crops and cleared land when not working for



E. L. Grigsby of Gentryville, lineal descendant of Reuben Grigsby, first employer of Thomas Lincoln in Indiana, is shown above at a well on his farm where the Lincoln family did its washing. It was at this well that Sarah Lincoln, brother of Abraham, and Aaron Grigsby, who became her husband, often met during their courtship.

Below is a picture of a butcher knife in possession of Grigsby and one of his most highly treasured possessions. This knife, which was unearthed by him about 20 years ago, has carved on its handle "A. Lincoln." Grigsby is positive the carving was done by Abe Lincoln himself.

site where Abraham and his sister Sarah, attended school with the Grigsby boys and girls, of whom there were 14, and other neighborhood children.

In due time the Lincolns moved to a house just northeast one-half mile from Old Pigeon church (now a part of Nancy Hanks Lincoln park). Then, in time, they moved to a home purchased by Thomas Lincoln at what is now Lincoln City and where they lived until they emigrated to Illinois.

During all this time, while the Lincolns were carrying water and doing their washing at the Grigsby spring (now in the northwest corner of the barn lot on the Ed Roos farm about three miles southeast of Gentryville) the courtship of Sarah Lincoln and Aaron Grigsby was in progress, terminating in a happy marriage. But their happiness was of short duration, when she died January 20, 1828, in childbirth, lacking until February 10 of reaching her twenty-first birthday. Her baby was buried in her arms.

AARON'S GRIEF HEAVY

Aaron never ceased to grieve over his loss and lived less than three years, and was buried by the side of his wife and baby in the old Pigeon cemetery.

Abraham Lincoln and my great uncle Nathaniel Grigsby were great chums, Nathaniel being one year older than Abraham. They attended

Feb 12 1833
Often Heard Grandfather Relate Interesting Incidents of Pioneer Years

social gatherings, prize fights, and church gatherings. Uncle Nathan often told me of times when Abraham would borrow a book, about him gathering dry dogwood and hickory limbs to make light for his reading after night and the running and jumping and trying to go with girls. He told me about the sickness and death of Abraham's mother, and the burial, which he attended, and how he showed the Studebakers her grave when they erected the first marker.

My grandfather, R. D. Grigsby, who was younger than Abraham, often would tell me how he would follow Abraham and the older Grigsby boys to a swimming hole in Buckhorn creek; how he would stay nights with his brother, Aaron and wife, Sarah, and how they would make a pallet down for him and Abraham to sleep on, as he (Abraham) stayed most of his time with his sister after her marriage until her death.

OWNS LINCOLN LAND

I have often thought of the time when I was a small boy riding horseback with my grandfather rounding up his stock, cattle, sheep, hogs, as all stock ran at large. Then there came up a severe rainstorm and he led the horses into the old schoolhouse the Lincolns attended and he impressed on my mind what a great man Abraham Lincoln was—THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. He told me always to remember "This is where Abraham Lincoln went to school." This land was owned by my grandfather, R. D. Grigsby. When I was a small boy I was in all the buildings the Lincolns lived in and I now own the land the pole house and schoolhouse stood on, and the land Thomas and Abraham cleared and made rails and built a fence around, about eight acres.

Abraham Lincoln, after he became president, often corresponded with my grandfather, offering him any position he might want and could fill. The correspondence continued until the death of Lincoln. And when the news of the death of Abraham Lincoln reached here, my grandfather became very sick from the shock and Uncle Nathaniel Grigsby fainted.

When the Lincolns left for Illinois, two of the Grigsbys, Nathaniel and Charlie, accompanied them the first day, stopping at what used to be Licksillet, stayed all night there, and returned to their home.

Some 20 years ago, with Otis Tribbie, I was going over my land—the 80 acres where the pole house stood and near the schoolhouse site. I had this fenced and many hogs in this field. In crossing the field, near a large mulberry tree, which is still standing, we found an old homemade butcher knife with a black walnut handle, inlaid with silver mountings and rivets, with the inscription "A. Lincoln" cut in the handle. The blade has the point broken off, but the handle is in a good state of preservation. The hogs had rooted this butcher knife up. I consider this one of the most interesting finds of my life.

Route 1.
Fort Dodge La
Dec. 16, 1936.

Mr Louis Austin Warren.
Zionsville Indiana -

Dear Sir:- after reading your book and history on Abraham Lincoln's life, I am writing you in regards to Abraham's sister Sarah. What I wish to know did she at the time of her death leave a living child or did she leave a first child and die at the second child birth. I have always understood that my fathers family the (Grigsby's) were related to the Lincoln family, I know my great grand father Captain John Grigsby, (a Captain in Fremonts Army) was neighbors to the Fremonts and Lincolns. I am wondering if he could of been Aaron Grigsby son by Sarah Lincoln? I have written you in hopes that perhaps you could enlighten me on the truth. Would be pleased to hear from you. I am
Resp. Mrs E. R. Mesler.

December 22, 1936

Mrs. E. R. Nesler
Route 1
Fort Dodge, Iowa

Dear Madam:

Your letter addressed to me at Zionsville, Indiana, has been forwarded to Fort Wayne and I take pleasure in enclosing a bulletin which I think will answer many of the questions which you raise in your letter. If there are other questions which this brief bulletin suggests, we will be glad to answer them if we can.

Very truly yours

LAW:LH
Enc,

Director

The National Grigsby Family Society

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August 5, 1990

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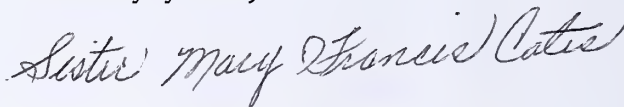
Re: Grigsby Reunion in Springfield, IL

Dear Ruth:

Enclosed is a copy of a tape I made of the Speech of Honorable Paul Findley at the National Grigsby Family Society Family Reunion in Springfield, IL on July 14, 1990. I thought you would find it interesting.

I think it was copied all right and that you will be able to hear the talk. If there is a problem, let me know and I will see if I can get another copy made.

Sincerely yours,



Sister Mary Francis Cates, O.S.F.

Enclosure

See also:

National Grigsby Family Society Newsletter

Select issues 1981-2008 available in the Lincoln Financial
Foundation Collection at the Allen County Public Library,
Fort Wayne, Indiana

For contact information, go to
www.LincolnCollection.org



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Sarah Briggs?

